



## Caring for Your Hermit Crabs

- Hermit crabs require an environment that has a “tropical” feel to it.
- The habitat should be kept at warm room temperature. The heater should only be used at night or over a weekend. If the habitat becomes too warm, the crab can suffer a slow and painful death..
- Land hermit crabs have modified gills that allow them to breathe air. The air must be humid or the gills will dry out, which will cause suffocation. The humidity level should be relatively high. To achieve this, focus on the following:
  - Two water dishes are attached to the bottom of the habitat. They are for drinking and bathing. They should be full at all times.
  - The water in the two dishes should be exchanged daily with fresh spring water. **No tap water for the crabs!**
  - The sand in the habitat should be kept moist. The consistency that would be appropriate for a sand castle is best. This can be achieved by misting the sand or drizzling water down the side on a regular basis.
- One to two times a week, add salt water to the loose cup in the terrarium. Extra salt water (saline) will be kept in the workroom. If you run out, you can refill your bottle. A salt water cup should always be added for the weekend.
- Explanation about the food:
  - The hermit crabs do not need much food. Sprinkle food in the cap. Do not add water. You should still be able to see some of the bottom of the cap. If you can't, there's too much food. The crabs have been eating this food and like both the powder and the pellets.
  - The food should be changed any time it gets moist or looks moldy. Otherwise, you can change and clean the pill cup once a week and add food as needed each day.

- Your class is welcome to add fruits and other food to the terrarium—however, absolutely no dairy products. Students should use the hermit crab books to determine appropriate foods to test. Any fresh produce should be removed after a day.
- Hermit crabs are nocturnal animals. If you do not see the crabs eating during the day, that is because they are probably eating at night. Be sure to check the food in the pill bottle cap on a regular basis.
- Hermit crabs are social, active animals. Please be sure to leave the shells and driftwood in the habitat for playing, climbing, and shell exchanging.
- Students should NOT be allowed to play with the hermit crabs.